Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT MONDAY, November 20, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TURKEY". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If you're planning to have the Thanksgiving dinner at your house this year--I have some suggestions that I believe will interest you. They have to do with roasting the Thanksgiving bird. In fact, I'm devoting this entire broadcast to that savory combination, which has always been associated with Thanksgiving day--turkey and savory stuffing.

But before I launch off on the why's and wherefore's of cooking turkey, I'd like to read you something I came across the other day about the turkey crop. I'm quoting from a U. S. Department of Agriculture release:

"Good news for those who choose turkey as the festive bird Thanksgiving is the estimate of the 1939 turkey crop. This year bids fair to being the largest in turkey history--much larger than it was last year--and probably 15 percent bigger than it was in 1936. Up to now--1936 has been the record year for turkeys."

So much for turkeys all over the country. Now about that one particular turkey that you may be roasting next Thursday. If you're going to buy it today, or tomorrow, or the next day--here's a rule you may find helpful.

"How big a turkey to buy is no problem at all if you do a little multiplication before you go to market. Allow 3/4 of a pound to 1 pound of turkey for each person to be served at the table. That is turkey, weighed as it is usually sold in retail markets--picked but not drawn--and with head and feet still on."

But to get on with the turkey cooking suggestions that I mentioned at the beginning--here are some from the Federal Bureau of Home Economics.

"No cook can afford to slight the details of getting the turkey ready to stuff. She plucks out pinfeathers carefully--and singes off the hairs. She scrubs the bird outside--rinses it, and wipes it dry both inside and out. Of course, she never lets turkey or any other poultry soak in water to lose flavor and food value.

"When the turkey was drawn she saw to it that the crop was removed through a slit at the back of the neck in order not to spoil the appearance of the breast. Now she cuts the neckbone off short, without removing this loose skin. Then she removes the oil sac at the base of the tail. With this routine work out of the way, the turkey is ready for savory stuffing."

And speaking of stuffings--here's one good proportion for a "dry type" of bread-crumb stuffing. Cook about one pint or more of mixed celery, parsley, onion, and any other seasoning you want in 3/4 cup of butter or other good-flavored fat. Cook it for a few minutes than add 2 quarts of medium-dry crumbs made from bread 2 to 3 days old.

"Sprinkle the inside of the turkey lightly with salt and fill it with this stuffing. And by fill I don't mean pack. A good way to figure out how much bread you'll need is to allow 1 cup for every pound less two of the turkey as you bought it--that is plucked but not drawn--with head and feet still on.

"That would mean that for a 14-pound turkey you'd want 12 cups of bread crumbs. Twelve cups of bread crumbs would be about 3 quarts. So if you wanted to make up the recipe I just gave you, you'd have to increase the seasonings to about 1-1/2 pints and use 1-1/2 times as much fat also--or about 1-1/8 cups of fat.

"Ordinarily a 1-pound loaf of bread will make about 1 quart of medium-dry bread crumbs. Do not use the crusts in stuffing because they make hard brown lumps and spoil the texture."

The longest part of getting turkey ready for the table is the roasting. Briefly, here are the recommendations for plump, young turkeys:

"Use an ordinary dripping pan with a rack in the bottom, and do not cover the pan. In a roaster like this any steam that forms can go off into the air--instead of staying inside to draw juices from the turkey.

"Turn small and medium-sized turkeys about every half hour. And baste with pan drippings, or butter, or other fat every time you turn them. For very large turkeys you'll only have to baste them about every hour because they are best cooked at a lower temperature."

And that brings me to the most important point of all in turkey roasting--the temperature. Keep this moderate all the time the turkey is roasting. And by moderate I mean around 300 degrees Fahrenheit. For small turkeys it may be a little more --for very large turkeys it will need to be even lower.

In the laboratories of the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, they've roasted hundreds of turkeys in the last few years. And they find that keeping the temperature moderate all the cooking time allows the turkey to cook evenly and retain its natural juices.

They've worked out some exact temperatures that are best for turkeys in different weight groups. And they also have the time that each of these different groups needs in the oven.

I'd give these to you now--but the figures are ones you'd have to take down exactly if you wanted to use them. So I suggest that if you'd like to have the timetable for roasting young turkeys--as well as helpful information about all sorts of poultry cooking that you write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for their free poultry cooking leaflet. Just ask for "Poultry Cooking". It's free for the asking--from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

###